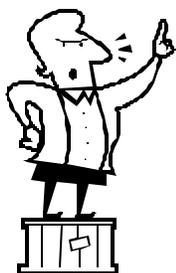


Advocacy

An *advocate* is a person who speaks for someone else, to help them get what they need. Lawyers do this. Sometimes case managers do this. Often parents advocate for their children. An advocate has a clear purpose and they definitely take sides. It's a very different role than that of mediator or educator.

Taking sides doesn't mean that an advocate is loud, unfair, or unaware of the needs of the other side. To be effective in advocacy, we must be able to say things in a way that the other person can hear. Sometimes we need to hear what the other side needs so we can help them give us what we need.

Advocates help people who are disempowered. Parents advocate for children, because children have no power. Lawyers advocate for their clients because the client has not been able to get what he needs. Sometimes case managers advocate for us to get the services we need. People who are very old or very young, people who are ill or have a disability, people who cannot get what they need all can benefit from advocacy. As a Peer Service Provider, it's very likely that you will have an opportunity to advocate for someone you serve.



Advocates work to help individuals get what they need, but advocacy is important for larger groups as well. A case manager might advocate for a group of people who need a particular service. A social worker might advocate for the needs of a community. Or an advocate might represent a very large group of people, such as children or people with disabilities, and engage in legislative advocacy.

Legislative advocates represent people (usually large groups) in an effort to pass (or stop) legislation that affects the group. No matter if it's a single person or a whole population, advocates do their best to help that person or group get what they need.

When do you think you might have an opportunity to act as an advocate? _____

As a Peer Support Provider, you may be able to advocate for someone who:

- ☺ Wants to change providers
- ☺ Needs a new place to live
- ☺ Is having unbearable side effects from their medication
- ☺ Has a problem with a roommate
- ☺ Is trying to get vocational rehabilitation services

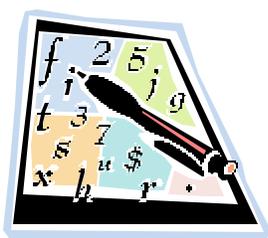
When you are acting as an advocate for someone, be sure you are very clear about what they want before you begin to speak for them. You may want to make notes and ask a lot of questions so you'll be able to provide adequate information on behalf of the person. Try not to misrepresent their needs and interests; be honest about what you are asking for.



Acting as an advocate for someone is a wonderful way to help people. An even better way to help someone is to teach them how to advocate for themselves. Peer support is usually a temporary relationship; we won't be providing services to that person forever. Part of our job is to help them develop skills, strengths and connections that will support them once we're no longer working with the person. You may decide to undertake advocacy together with the person, or with the person present and watching you. Maybe you will advocate for someone once and then support them in doing it themselves the next time. One of the things that makes peer support "peer" is passing on our knowledge and skills.

Advocacy, as we mentioned, is not the same thing as insisting or yelling. It doesn't mean we take up another person's cause like we're entering battle. The best advocates learn to say things in a way that the other person can hear clearly. Some simple guidelines will help you be as effective as possible.

- ⌘ Get your facts straight and complete
- ⌘ Identify the person who can help you (target)
- ⌘ Be prepared
- ⌘ Be polite
- ⌘ Speak in a normal tone of voice
- ⌘ Be persistent
- ⌘ Mobilize support when necessary



Get your facts straight and complete

Before you set out on a crusade to right a wrong, be sure you have all the facts. Start with the person for whom you will advocate. Make sure you have heard everything they have to say about this topic. It's not enough to hear just their complaint; you must understand any history, any efforts they have made to solve the problem, and anything that has been done by anyone else. If other people are involved, see if you can get their perspective too. If you begin advocating for someone based on incomplete information, you may embarrass yourself and the person you serve. You may also lose a lot of credibility. When we begin to advocate for someone, people notice if we have really done our homework. Make sure you know everything you need to know before you begin.

Identify the person who can help you (target)

Advocacy is an effort *for* someone (the person you serve) and *to* someone (the person you ask for help). You're already clear about advocating *for* the person receiving services. To whom will you aim your advocacy efforts? Who is the person who can really help resolve this situation? A lot of time and effort can be wasted by pitching a well-researched advocacy effort at someone who has no power to help you. You may need to ask a few questions before you choose your target.

Be prepared

Speaking firmly on behalf of someone else is not a familiar or comfortable role for many of us. Expect to meet at least a little resistance, or at the least to be able to answer some questions. It's

a good idea to make some notes and take them with you. You might even want to write out a script so you don't forget the main points you want to cover. Don't be afraid to refer to your notes when you are talking. The target person will respect the fact that you have come prepared and you have good notes.

Be polite

When you need something from someone and you have not been able to get it, it's natural to begin to view the other person as an adversary. This view is not useful in advocacy. It's true that the other person has the power to give you what you need, but try not to assume that they are withholding what you need out of malice or meanness. Assume that you have not gotten what you want because the person needs more information. Try to view your target as a partner in helping you get what you need. No matter how difficult your work becomes, do not lose your temper! Avoid name-calling or implications that the target person is anything other than a reasonable human being.



Speak in a normal tone of voice

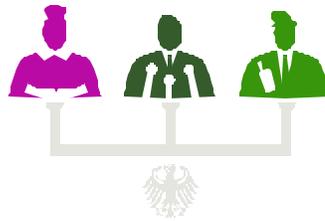
Speak like you would in any ordinary conversation. There is no need to raise your voice to get your point across. In fact, if you raise your voice, the target person will be *less* likely to be reasonable about your request. Try to avoid a tone of voice that reveals sarcasm, frustration, anger, or condescension.

Be persistent

Your advocacy efforts may be so effective that the target person quickly agrees to give you what you need. Or it may take more time and more persuasion. If the person says "no," do not give up. You may offer more information right away, or you can come back later with more facts. You may need to speak to someone else who can help you. Ask to speak to the person's supervisor. If you sense that the target person is getting angry or frustrated, you may want to end your efforts for the day and come back at another time. It doesn't help to become annoying.

Mobilize support when necessary

Some advocacy efforts work best when large numbers of people support the effort. Advocating for a new service is a good example. You and some of the people you serve may want your service provider to offer a new type of counseling. See how many people you can get to sign a petition, or attend a meeting, or write to the target person. Volume counts.



Legislative advocacy

Many people believe that they have no impact on what happens in the state and federal legislature. Or they may think that legislators don't do anything that affects our lives directly. Both of these ideas are completely untrue. Legislators have some ideas of their own, but they prefer to hear about issues from the people whose lives are directly affected. At the level of the state, legislation has an impact on the services that are available to people with mental illness. The budget has probably the greatest impact on whether needed services will be there when we need them.

You can have an impact on the issues that affect you in several ways. First, register to vote, and vote. Find out who represents you at a local and state level. Second, stay informed about upcoming legislature and budget activities. Find a local resource who can keep you up to date. Third, let your legislators know how you feel. You can call, write, or email. Fourth, tell your friends about issues of interest and encourage them to get involved as well. In recent years, mental health advocacy groups have exerted considerable influence on the state legislature in Arizona and as a result of that effort, it is now (finally!) illegal in Arizona to discriminate against someone with a mental illness regarding employment. You can make a difference.

Communication Fundamentals

Most of us who are involved in peer support start this work because we want to help others like ourselves. In order to be truly helpful, we must be able to communicate clearly with the other person. Communication involves more than just speaking; it also involves listening well so that we can understand. The way we speak and listen also reflects our role in the other person's life: your case manager speaks to you in a different way than does your friend. Learning to be a Peer Support Provider includes learning to speak in a way that models hope, listening deeply, and sharing support instead of giving directions.



Listening. The first skill we need in communication is listening. Remember that the other person is the expert in his life, and we want to learn about his strengths and challenges from the expert. You may have read something about this person before the first meeting, but try not to let that get in your way.

What are some traits of a good listener?

When have you felt really “heard”? Who has really listened to what you have to say? _____



When you listen, be *patient*. Give the person time to think of what she wants to say. Try not to finish her sentences. Don't tell her what she means. If you're not sure, ask.

Listen for *strengths*. See if you can find something that you admire or respect about the person. Listen for common experiences to help you understand.

Listen for *meaning*. Again, try not to assume that you understand what the other person means by common words like "respect." For example, if the other person says, "I just want to be treated with respect!" ask, what would that look like for you?

Listen for *hope*. When you hear that someone has felt hope, or acted in a way that expressed hope, support that.

Listen to *witness*. We all need to be acknowledged as human beings, as people who struggle with life and are hungry for success. Many people living with serious mental illness are very isolated. Simply hearing what another person has to say is a gift.

Because it's not our job, as the PSP, to give direction, we may spend a lot of time listening and much less time speaking. We are not qualified to diagnose, direct, advise, or otherwise make decisions for the people we serve, but we can support them in discovering their dreams, their strengths, and their hope. Your specific job may require you to have certain kinds of communication with others, but as Peer Support Providers, we always let the other person take the lead.



Modeling hope. When we do speak, the things we have to say will reflect our recovery. We want to acknowledge any difficulty that the person is experiencing, yet affirm our belief that people can and do recover. It's a fine line between validating someone's pain and staying stuck.

What kinds of things have people said to you that inspired hope? _____

What would you have liked to hear, but didn't? _____

How do you think you can find that balance between validating someone's feelings and helping them find hope? _____



Encouragers. We can use specific communication skills to encourage a conversation, to build trust, to model hope, to help the other person know that we are truly listening. All of these skills encourage the person to speak, and help to build the relationship. Here are some specific skills that you will use when working as a PSP.

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Use when:</i>	<i>Example</i>
Open-ended questions	You want to encourage the person to say more	“What was it that you liked about your job?”
Closed-ended questions (yes or no answers)	You want to close down a line of conversation or change topics	“Did you like your job?” “Do you want to get a roommate?”
Reflection	You want to reflect meaning or feelings back to the person speaking	“It sounds to me like it wasn’t a good experience and you’re hoping you won’t have to go through that again.”
Reframing	You want to encourage the person to look at things from a different perspective	“So you think that your friend didn’t speak to you because she was mad at you. Maybe she was just preoccupied and didn’t notice you. Is that possible?”
Validation	You want to acknowledge the emotional content of the speaker’s words	“I guess you’re feeling pretty sad right now.”
Wondering	You want to ask for more information in a non-judgmental, non-threatening way	“I wonder if you’re thinking about getting back at the person who hurt you.”
Partializing	You want to focus on one topic at a time	“I hear that you have a lot on your mind. Could we talk about just this one thing for a few minutes?”
Clarifying	You want to be sure you understand the person.	“Let me see if I understand this. Did you say . . . “
Summarizing	You want to summarize the conversation so you can move on.	“Let me just say back to you what I understand you to be saying.:

There are *non-verbal* encouragers, as well. These include making eye contact, facing the person, paying attention, avoiding distracting behaviors, and saying things like, “uh-huh.”

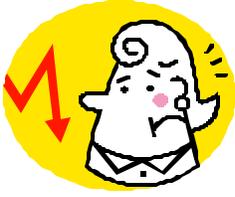


Discouragers. Just as some communication skills encourage conversation, others will discourage further talk and block the development of trust that happens when we're building a relationship. Here are some habits to avoid.

<i>Habit</i>	<i>Example</i>
Giving advice	"Here's what you should do . . ."
Making predictions	"If you don't take your meds as prescribed, you'll be back in the hospital next week."
Being the center of attention	"You think you had a hard day? Let me tell you about what happened to me!"
Minimizing	"By next year, you will have forgotten all about this."
Reading minds	"You don't really mean that, you're just tired."
Patronizing	"Of course I like your little friends."
Interrogation	"What were you thinking? Why didn't you talk to somebody before you did that?" Don't you think it's a bad idea?"
Judgments	"You had trouble with your roommate because you can't keep your mouth shut."
Lectures	"You should stop spending all your money on junk food. You'd be healthier and you could save some money."
Diagnosing	"That's not a valid statement; it's just your symptoms talking."

Non-verbal discouragers include looking around the room while someone is speaking, avoiding eye contact, doodling or taking notes, turning your back, or making distracting movements like tapping a pencil or your fingers.

The way we use language makes a difference in our relationship. The language of doctors and counselors can create a sense of distance, reinforcing the idea that the professional is the expert. You know the language of diagnoses, medications and symptoms, but it's easier to stay peer if you're using simple language. Instead of talking about symptoms, talk about what experiences or feelings. Don't confuse ordinary human emotions with symptoms. Try to use the plain words you would have used if you'd never heard of symptoms or diagnoses.



Some situations pose special problems for communication. It may be that we're triggered by something that comes up. Or maybe we're not sure what to do. Often when the person we're serving is experiencing a lot of discomfort, we want very much to do something to help, but we don't know what to do. When we're confronted by something that makes us uncomfortable, it's easy to overreact. Here are some guidelines for special situations.

- ◆ *Anger.* Sometimes anger is an appropriate response. Remember that there's a difference between anger and symptoms. Acknowledge that it may be the right response for the situation. Don't get angry back. Try not to take it personally. Let the person express their anger. Wait until the person is calmer before trying to look for solutions.
- ◆ *Despair.* What if the person doesn't want your help? Take a look at what sort of "help" you've been offering. Most people are happy to have someone who will just "be" with them, without trying to direct them or analyze them. Try letting the person take the lead.
- ◆ *Negativity.* When we've been sick for a long time, perhaps in "the system" for a long time, we learn about illness culture. This means that the illness becomes the main focus of life, and the person believes they have no power to overcome symptoms and other difficulties. Be patient and keep modeling hope.
- ◆ *Misunderstanding.* This could happen for many reasons. It could be that the person you're serving is from a different culture, and is doing or saying things that you don't understand. Or the person may be feeling very emotional or distressed and doesn't seem to be "making sense." Sometimes the person we're serving doesn't understand us. Either way, try to let go of your need to be "right." Don't assume that the other person is "symptomatic." Ask lots of questions, or if it's the other person who doesn't understand, try to explain yourself. Be patient. Keep talking. Say, "help me understand."

It helps to practice, and to watch others using these skills. We will take some time for role plays, and giving each other feedback on our practice.

The one and only you. The most important thing to remember about communication is—be yourself. Remember who you are. We may be tempted to try to imitate our counselors, doctors, or case managers. But we can't be successful by imitating them, for several reasons. First, they do a different job. Peer Support Providers have a different task and work in a different way. We are meant to provide support and encouragement, not to evaluate and direct. Second, everybody has their own unique style of communication. Use your own wonderful style. Be yourself. You are the perfect person for your job. Let that person shine through.



Promoting Self-esteem

Self-esteem can be hard to find and hard to hold onto. For people who have a diagnosis of serious mental illness, maintaining self-esteem in the face of continuous negative messages can be a challenge. The TV offers descriptions of people with mental illness as unable to control themselves, angry, aggressive, and hostile. Villains of the big screen are frequently people who have a mental illness of some kind. Even when it is not expressly stated, conversations about the person can include words like crazy, psycho, and nuts. Therefore, even when the message is subtle, it comes across.

It takes a lot of strength to confront stigma and rise above it to achieve self-esteem. Look at the following table called **Reality Check**. Note that one side is full of negative messages you might send yourselves, and the other takes a more realistic view of who you are and what you are capable of accomplishing:



Reality Check

Negative Internal Messages	Reality
I cannot do anything right...	I do lots of things correctly each day, everyone makes a mistake now and then...
I am stupid...	I have managed to live on SSI or SSDI and that takes creative thinking and intelligence
I am fat...	I am trying hard to take care of myself. Some of my medications cause me to gain weight, but I choose to manage my symptoms and be well. Besides, I am wonderful just the way I am.

Negative Internal Messages	Reality
I have no skills in the workplace...	I have lots of skills that I have not recognized as skills before. I can manage money, I am friendly, I am caring. Those are all good tools to have in the workplace. I can learn many things and develop more skills.
My family does not even like me...	Sometimes I do not like my family. People do not always get along, but they can still love each other. I can also create a new “family” of people I love to be around.
I am not as (<i>insert word...handsome, pretty, smart, rich, funny, etc.</i>) as _____ (pick a name, any name).	Sometimes the TV and magazines, or even just being with people, creates feelings that I am not as good as someone else. When I really stop and think, I do not know about their whole life. Perhaps they struggle with things I could never imagine. I see what they want me to see. I have lots of wonderful qualities and perhaps have gifts in my life that I need to notice.
If I could only...	If I really want to...then plan to. I can create a plan to do almost anything I want. Save a little money each month, buy a new outfit at a thrift store, go on dollar day and get some shoes, too!
I cannot finish this class...	I am doing just that, right now, just by being here.
I never make good decisions...	I have made difficult decisions all my life. Even if some I have made did not work out, others have.
I am no good...	The fact that I am taking this class to help others should tell me that I have good inside me!

We can make a choice to change the thinking that creates low self-esteem. Instead of repeating negative statements repeatedly in our minds, we can find replacement statements that we will say every single time our low self-esteem “tape” starts to play.

Here are some of my low self-esteem statements:

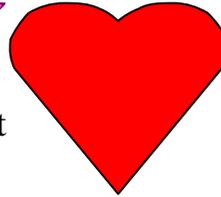
Statement	Replacement

Did you find that lots of low self-esteem statements came to mind very quickly? If so, you are like lots of other people. People with or without a psychiatric diagnosis have low self-esteem. Sometimes the people we least expect to have any problem with self-esteem are the ones struggling the most.

Is low self-esteem part of our illness? Maybe it is and maybe it is not. Only you can decide which is true. Sometimes we fear that others will not like us. What if you have to adapt yourself to help someone be your friend? This will become tiring very quickly. One of the ways that we can build self-esteem is by being who we are. This is being authentic. When we are authentic, we know that our friends love us just the way we are. Knowing that someone cares for us, faults and all, can help us to learn to love ourselves. Loving ourselves helps us to believe in ourselves and that will give us more self-esteem.

These things may seem obvious. However, how many times do you know what to do to feel better and not do it? Now is the time for us to change. Remember the song by Whitney Houston? It says, "Learning to love yourself, it is the greatest gift of all!" Loving yourself is a gift. One way of showing yourself that you are wonderful is to be kind to yourself. What are some things you can do to be kind to yourself? Make a list right here of things, like wellness tools,

only we can call them “I love me tools,” that you can do to nurture and show yourself that you love YOU!



My Love ME List

I can show myself how much I love me by:

- ♥ _____
- ♥ _____
- ♥ _____
- ♥ _____
- ♥ _____
- ♥ _____
- ♥ _____
- ♥ _____
- ♥ _____
- ♥ _____

That is a good start. It feels funny to say, “My love me list.” We all fall into the trap of loving everyone but ourselves and nurturing everyone but ourselves. However, when you are working, especially as a Peer Support Provider, you need to take care of yourself so that you can serve others. Taking care of ourselves and loving ourselves has to become something that we do without thinking. Can we suddenly change from not liking who we are or believing we are inferior in some way? No. However, change must begin somewhere, so let it start here.

I am wonderful because...

◆ _____

◆ _____

◆ _____

◆ _____

◆ _____

◆ _____

◆ _____

◆ _____

◆ _____

Don't be surprised if this process seems very strange to you. We have all spent lots of time finding out what is wrong with ourselves or what we do not like about ourselves. However, look for those qualities that you know are there. Some examples might be that you are strong, you are brave, and you are gentle. Use "I" statements so that you really put the thoughts and feelings where they belong—in you! No one has to see this but you, but share your thoughts with someone if you can. Perhaps a strength that you have hidden away or never shared with anyone else is a strength that one of your classmates needs to see in themselves.

Be ready to support each other to say, "Thanks" when complimented instead of, "No, no, it wasn't me." If you do well on a test, congratulate yourself and believe that it came of your studying and hard work and not by some accident!

Cut out the next page and tape it to your mirror. That way you can see it every morning and start the day off right!

I am a wonderful human being;

I am one of a kind! I love
myself and treasure all that I am
now and all that I have been
before. The things that came
before make me who I am and I
treasure who I am!

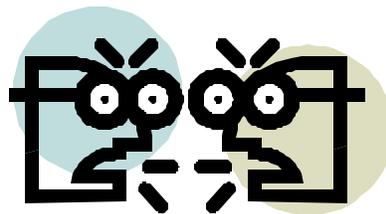


CONFLICT!

Conflict is an experience that many people find very difficult. Conflict arises from many different things. When have you experienced conflict, and what was the conflict about?

What do you feel when you're experiencing conflict? _____

Why do you think people have conflicts? _____



Conflicts occur when several things happen. First, two (or more) people disagree about something. You may have a different opinion about something, or a different belief, or a different idea about what should be done. This is the beginning of the conflict. But it's not enough by itself to create real conflict. Think of a time when you and someone close to you had a difference of opinion, but it wasn't a problem. What do you think made it okay?

A difference of opinion often turns into a conflict because of our perceptions about the situation, and what we think about our perceptions. It's a complicated process that takes place in less time than you need to take a breath.

Let's look at an example. Suppose you work with someone who often asks you to do things for him. He asks you to bring him a cup of coffee, or loan him a pen, or answer a phone call. The things he asks for are all things he could do for himself, and they are not specifically in your job description. You thought you would be nice and do him a favor or two, so you have always done what he asked. Now, however, you are starting to feel angry and upset about this. It happens almost every day, and you've also noticed that he doesn't offer to do things for you in return. It's becoming annoying. Today, as soon as you get to work and before you even sit down, he asks if you would grab a notepad from the supply room before you sit down. You snap at him, "Get it yourself!" And you're thinking, "you selfish, lazy jerk." Now you have a conflict.

Let's look at what happened inside you to make it a conflict. First, look at the perception. You "saw" that your coworker often asked you to do something for him that he was very capable of doing himself. Would that simple perception create a conflict for you? Why or why not?

When we "see" something like the experience above and begin to feel upset about it, our anger and hurt feelings don't come straight from what we saw. The feelings come from what we think it means. We create stories in our minds about what we see. The stories are based on our past experience, the culture in which we live, and other factors. These stories are created very quickly, usually without our notice. These stories give meaning to the actions that we see.



In the example above, what “story” do you think the person told herself about the coworker?

The story may be, “he’s lazy,” “he’s selfish,” “he thinks he’s better than I am,” “he’s treating me like a servant because I’m [female] [black/Hispanic] [gay] [mentally ill]. . .” The story is what creates a feeling of anger and hurt. We’re not angry simply because someone asks us to do something for them, but if we think they’re doing it for a reason that makes us feel inferior, then we’re angry.

Sometimes our “stories” come from the larger stories that make up the culture in which we live. For instance, some men in conflict will do whatever it takes to win the argument or disagreement. They may do this because they believe a story that says men must win, or they’re wimpy. In the example above, if the coworker is a man and the first person is a woman, the woman may believe the story that says men should have power over women.

Let’s look closely at the example again. Look only at what the people are doing. Can you tell from the description what the coworker meant by asking for little things? Do you know what story the coworker was living? What do you think the coworker’s story might be? _____

Now try to imagine an alternate story. _____

When we experience conflict, the first thing we can do is to check out our “story.” What do we believe this action means? Is it possible it could mean something different than that? How would you know?

It’s true that in some conflicts, there is clearly one person who is wrong and one who is right. More often, we have simple disagreements among the people with whom we have ongoing relationships, and we just *think* that the other person is wrong. Having this type of conflict with people who are close to us can cause irreparable damage to the relationship. Remember that conflict happens in *every* relationship—it’s unavoidable—so of course it will happen with the people closest to us. When we find ourselves in disagreement, or conflict, with someone like this, we work to resolve the disagreement with the context of the relationship always in mind. For instance, in a conflict with a coworker, to avoid getting bogged down in our feelings about the disagreement, we might keep in mind how well we have worked together in the past, or what things we enjoy about the relationship as a whole.

Ingredients of Resolution



The best way of managing conflict is to watch for it, be aware of beginning conflicts, and take immediate steps to prevent the disagreement from getting bigger. Sometimes, however, conflict escalates before we address it. When that happens, we need to take steps to resolve it.

There are lots of things to consider when we’re trying to resolve an established conflict. Here are four important ingredients in resolving conflict:

- ☆ Preparation
- ☆ Perceptions and assumptions
- ☆ Power in partnership
- ☆ Creating shared solutions

Let’s look a little more closely at each of these ingredients.

Preparation

Let's say you've been having an ongoing disagreement with your partner about cleaning up after each other. It's been going on for a while, and you're feeling pretty frustrated. You and your partner are at a party with your best friends. Something comes up that brings to mind your ongoing disagreement, and you say something about it in front of your friends. How do you think your partner will respond to that? Do you think this is a smart way to approach this conflict?

Preparation is important in conflict resolution. You will want to take some time to consider your approach, including the other "ingredients" we will talk about following. Pick a good time, one when neither of you is distracted by other commitments or people. Choose a location in which you will have privacy, enough time without interruptions to complete your discussion. And think about an opening statement that will contribute to resolution instead of "stirring the pot."

Perceptions and assumptions

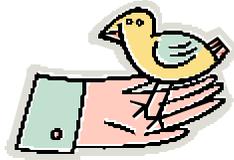
Perceptions and assumptions play a huge role in conflict, as we discussed at the beginning of this module. We looked at how our assumptions about the other person's "story" influence our response. Other perceptions and assumptions also play a part in creating and resolving conflict. Remember what you said you feel when you think about conflict? That is a *perception* that will color the entire experience.

When you're preparing to resolve conflict, look at how you're thinking about the disagreement itself. As you think about it, do you breathe a little harder? Does your pulse rate get faster? Are you feeling mad or scared? These responses are related to your basic ideas about conflict. Try thinking of the conflict as an experience that will bring you and the other person closer together, provided you take the time to do it well. Notice also how you are thinking about the other person. Are you thinking of them as mean? Unfair? Selfish? Are you putting them in the position of adversary? Or are you remembering who they are in the context of the relationship? When you remember strongly the good things that you like about the person, it's easier to remember that you're in this together, and you can resolve it together.

Power in Partnership

There are lots of ways to use power, and we will look more closely at power in a few minutes. For now, let's think about a conflict the kind of relationship that will be ongoing: partner, friend, roommate, coworker, neighbor. We know that the context of the relationship is important: this person will continue to be in that relationship with us, and it will be much easier to do that if we can work together. Therefore, we want to use the unique kinds of power that lead to partnership.

We may be tempted to use negative power, the kind of power that leads to resentment, anger, frustration, even violence. Negative power is in force when someone uses name-calling, manipulation, tricks, dishonesty, or any other kind of force. This damages the trust that is necessary for relationships. Positive power, on the other hand, helps people feel good and strengthens relationships. We use positive power when we compliment people, ask for their ideas, tell the truth, avoid being defensive, keep our emotions in check, and believe that the other person's needs are important too. Using positive power, we form a *partnership* with the other person that increases our ability to resolve conflict and builds connections that stand the test of time.



Creating shared solutions

When we're in partnership with someone, we honor the needs of both people. In creating a solution to conflict in partnership, we look out for everyone's best interest. In some conflicts, we just want to win and that's the end of the conflict. For instance, if you have a dispute with a former landlord about returning your cleaning deposit, you will do whatever it takes to get all your money back. However, chances are you will never have to see the former landlord again. A partnership considers the context of the relationship, honoring your desire to continue the relationship.

In partnership, we don't make demands. We look for solutions that please everyone, getting as creative as we need to be to meet those needs. We worry as much about the other person being

happy as we do about our own desires. It may help to remind yourself regularly of the context of the relationship. Why am I bothering to do this? What will be the long-term outcome? What will happen to the relationship if we don't work together in this way?

It's important to be very clear about details when resolving a conflict. In the example about partners disagreeing about cleaning up after each other, for instance, it's not enough to decide that each of you will "help out more." What does "help out more" mean? This kind of open-ended, vague resolution will almost certainly lead to further frustration and ongoing conflict. Instead, define what needs to be done, who will do what, how often it needs to be done, when you might re-examine your arrangement, and how you will communicate about the problem in the future. Take your time. Find out how each of you is feeling about the problem, and about each possible resolution. In this setting, you learn about each other and you extend care and compassion to each other, building a strong foundation for your future together.

Conflict & Power

Power is an important component in much of our conflict. Sometimes conflict arises because someone is using their power to win, rather than treating us as equals. What kinds of power can you think of in a mental health treatment setting? _____

Who typically has the power when you sit with your doctor? Your case manager? Your best friend? Your banker? Your mother and father? Your children? Your neighbor? _____

In most relationships, power tends to flow between one person and another. When you first go into your doctor's office, for example, you may think that the doctor has all the power. However, let's say the doctor orders something you don't like. You may respond by threatening

suicide. When you do that, you have taken the power. Now the doctor must respond to your move. What other ways do we take power? _____

Let's say you are working at a drop-in center as a peer supporter. Someone has been causing disruption among other members. How might you be tempted to use your power?

Some common things people do to take power include:

- ☆ Gossip
- ☆ Acting helpless
- ☆ Yelling, getting angry
- ☆ Using big words, technical language
- ☆ Threatening suicide or self-injury
- ☆ Using a job role as authority
- ☆ Calling the police
- ☆ Refusing to participate

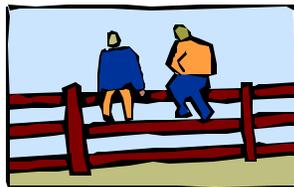
In the example above, when someone has been disruptive and you are the peer supporter, you may be tempted to use your job role, to assume that you *must* take control of the situation and make that person “behave.” Have you ever tried that? How did that work?



This is exactly what some doctors, nurses, and case managers do to us in “the system.” In any disagreement or conflict, they use the power of their role to force us to do that they think we should do. This may solve the conflict—for the time being—but it may also create a new conflict, one based on them using power against us. What happens for you when someone forces you to do something, using power in this way? _____

What happens to the relationship? _____

It’s easy to fall into that role of taking power, using our job role to make things safe and comfortable. We do that for several reasons. First, we don’t like seeing people uncomfortable and we want to help. Second, we may be frightened and worry that, if we don’t take control, something bad will happen. Finally, we’re used to seeing things happen that way. All around us, in almost every setting, we see the use of power that’s invisible, unspoken.



There is a different way to be with people, one that doesn’t rely on the use of power. Peer support uses that way. In peer support, we do our best not to use power to force things to happen. Instead, we talk to people as equals, as peers. We negotiate behavior. We share our own discomfort. In fact, being peer involves a *lot* of sitting with discomfort since we can’t use our power to force someone to “behave.”

Can you think of a way to talk with someone who is being disruptive, without using your power as a staff person? _____

Try to combine what we learned earlier about conflict. Think about the person who is being disruptive. What story are you making up in your head? What are you feeling? Are you afraid? What are you afraid of? Now, try to think of another story that could explain what's happening. How can you find out what would help the person?

Here are a few things to remember about conflict:

- ☆ Slow down. Take your time. Practice patience.
- ☆ Use “I” statements. Instead of talking about the other person’s behavior, talk about your experience of the situation.
- ☆ Ask yourself, “What would help us both? What would make the relationship stronger?”
- ☆ Ask the other person, “Help me understand.”
- ☆ Clarify perceptions. Ask a lot of questions.
- ☆ Suspend assumptions. If you find yourself assuming something, check it out.
- ☆ Remember the context of the relationship.



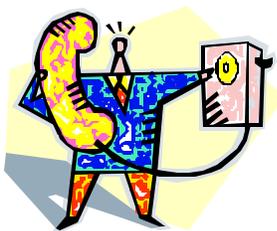
Resources in the Community

Recovery is a process that occurs in partnership with the person recovering and the support of other people and services. This is the general pattern of recovery, regardless of whether you are recovering from a broken leg or a mental illness. You utilize significant strengths of your own to achieve recovery, but you will also call upon the resources of the community to help you. The nature of your illness, the length of your illness, and the intensity of your symptoms will determine the nature and number of resources that each person will call upon.

As Peer Support Providers, we may be in a position to help people learn about and access community resources. The range of services that might be helpful is limited only by the range of resources that exist. Those resources might include:

- ❖ Vocational or employment services
- ❖ Educational opportunities
- ❖ Housing services
- ❖ Food and clothing resources
- ❖ Mental health services and medication
- ❖ General health and dental services
- ❖ Legal and advocacy resources
- ❖ Substance abuse programs
- ❖ Domestic violence services

As the PSP, it's helpful if you know some of the local resources in your area so that you can refer people to those services, if need be. Even more important, you may need to know just who to ask if you don't know where to find a resource.



Let's see how well you know the resources in your local area. Try to think of a resource that fits each of the categories we listed above. The resource can be a public source (for anyone, regardless of ability to pay) or a private source (for people who can pay, or who have insurance).

Vocational or employment services _____

Educational opportunities _____

Housing services _____

Food and clothing resources _____

Mental health services and medication _____

General health and dental services _____

Legal and advocacy resources _____

Substance abuse programs _____

Domestic violence services _____

What other resources do you know about in your community that might help people recover?

Let's see if you can think of resources for these additional categories:

Recreation _____

Social activities _____

Spirituality/religion _____

Self-discovery _____

Fitness _____

Diet/nutrition _____

Self-help groups _____



What other types of resources would you like to have? What else would help you or someone you know recover?



A Resource is Born

Where do resources come from? Community resources exist because there is a demand. If there is no need for resources, they close down, or don't get created in the first place. Resources may be public or private. They may be available to everyone, or there may be restrictions based on income or other eligibility requirements. It's helpful to know some resources, both public or private, but if you know just one, you can always start there. If you're calling the wrong resource, they will direct you to one that suits your needs more closely.

Public resources tend to change over time, perhaps more often than private resources. Public resources are subject to a bidding process to get contracts to provide services with government funding. If the agency doesn't do a good enough job, they may lose the contract. Or the public funding requirements may change; or the funding disappears. Many things can happen to resources. Because these resources aren't always stable, don't expect to always know every available resource. It's good if you know many of them, but it's enough just to know where to start asking. Accessing community resources can take patience! You may need to make multiple telephone calls before you find what you're looking for. Don't give up! Keep asking and looking, and chances are good that you will find something to help you get what you need.

It's frustrating to need a resource and not be able to find one. It's hard enough when that happens to us personally, but it can be very difficult when we're working as the PSP, trying to find a resource for someone we serve. Can you think of some ways in which we can help ensure that resources are available when we need them? _____

Here are some ideas for getting and keeping resources in your local area:

- ↳ Use resources when you know they are available (resources that aren't used, don't get funded again)
- ↳ Share resources with others to make sure the need is demonstrated
- ↳ Register to vote, and vote
- ↳ Keep informed about legislative issues that impact resources
- ↳ Call, write, or email your legislators about issues affecting resources
- ↳ Attend consumer advisory meetings, when available, for public resources
- ↳ Make suggestions to community resources about other services that would be helpful
- ↳ Encourage others to take the same actions
- ↳ Pay attention to the newspaper, radio or television news to see if any important local resources might be threatened
- ↳ Apply for grants to start and run needed resources



We can do many things to create and support resources in our community. Some we can do alone, but we are MUCH more powerful and effective when we work together. Learn and use advocacy skills and help people stay informed.

As you begin working as a PSP, you will learn more about community resources in your area. It's a good idea to start a notebook of these resources, so you will remember them later. Make divider tabs and organize your resources by type of need.